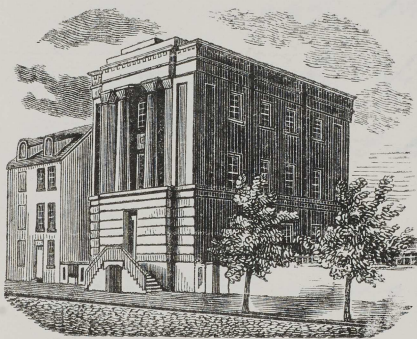


AN ESSAY ON

Post Mortem Examinations

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE



HOMOEOPATHIC MEDICAL COLLEGE
OF PENNSYLVANIA,

On the *30th* day of January, Eighteen Hundred and
Fifty-six.

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Post Mortem Examinations

Before we set about considering anything, be it what it may, it is right that we ascertain the thing to be such as is likely to be useful to us, and it is reasonable that the usefulness, should in point of magnitude, bear a just proportion to the expense, whether of time or money, demanded by the task which we are going to encounter.

A very little reflection will convince any one, that it is a branch of our art, which should commend itself to the careful consideration of every practitioner of

the healing art. It would be tedious to narrate all the reasons for making such examinations but when it is only by such researches, together with comparing one with another that we are enabled to add anything useful to the profession, or to our own limited information

No one should excuse himself, or refrain from contributing both time and money in the successful prosecution of the subject.

The science of Pathology is based upon the appearances presented in the examinations of diseased organs, contrasted with the same in a normal condition, and our prognosis

will be the more reliable, in proportion to our acquaintance with the changes which the various tissues undergo.

Auscultation and percussion, aid us in forming our diagnosis and a thorough acquaintance with the pathological anatomy of those parts, will not only add to our own satisfaction, but it will enable us to give an opinion, which will prove true, and which the doubting, with the aid of the scalpel will find correct.

In this country our opportunities for making such examinations are few, owing no doubt, to a misapprehension of the importance of the subject, but when an opportunity

is given, we should embrace it, and glean from it all we can, and store it by for future reference.

To be able to conduct such examinations properly we must be able to describe the normal condition of the healthy subject, if not, our researches will not redound much to our own credit, or to the interest of the profession.

If the popular mind was educated differently upon the importance of such examinations, our opportunities for making them would be increased, and our knowledge of various diseases would in a corresponding manner be increased, and physicians should use their influence

to break down the antipathy which exists to making such researches, for all are satisfied that it makes no particular difference to the subject, and does not necessarily hurt the feelings of the friends.

We are seldom requested to make more than a partial examination in any case, and no doubt much is lost from this fact, as many organs have sympathy with others situated in different localities.

But if we are careful to note all that can be seen in the dissection and then carefully comparing with others, and then reasoning from analogy, our conclusion may be such, as will guide us safely

through the most intricate combination of symptoms.

Our examinations should be thorough. We should lay aside our own preconceived opinions of the case, and be willing to adopt those, which may be unfolded in our dissections.

I fear too many are prone to hide the truth in many cases, simply to conceal their own ignorance, especially when they have given an opinion in the case, when they find their opinion may prove not correct, and their pride will not allow them to make an honest confession, that they had been mistaken in the case, and such a course would not only add to their edification

but it would enable them to be ready to confess that they sometimes are likely to err.

In making such examinations the external parts should be carefully removed. the various organs should be viewed as they are then situated. they may be in their normal condition, if not the changes should be noted, then remove them and scrutinize them still farther till there is no part, that has escaped notice.

By being thus particular we may expect to observe the least possible deviation from the healthy standard, and by this course our power for making observation will be increased.

We may be called upon to conduct the examination of a person found dead, with a view of ascertaining in what manner, and by what means life had been destroyed. This at first sight would seem an easy matter, and yet many circumstances may render it one of some perplexity and no little uncertainty. In making up an opinion in such a case, the location, the external appearances generally, the position, the features with the expression of the countenance, the external signs of violence, the wounds, if any, and with what kind of a weapon had the dreadful deed been committed, and after considering these, then sum up all the

circumstances and give an opinion as to the probable manner in which the individual perished.

Our evidence in such a case may be, may should be, of such a character as to release the innocent and bind the guilty.

Cases of poisoning may occur in which our knowledge of Toxicology may be tested, our information should extend so far, that we could give the various appearances presented by the multifarious poisons, and if needs be, apply the tests for the various poisons.

Of course this is no easy task. But the satisfaction in being able to accomplish it, will more than compensate for the time and money spent in

acquiring it. In making such examinations, some outlines should be given so that uniformity might, if possible be followed. But in this age of progress we are not likely to follow in the track of any one, but must take a different though perhaps one more difficult. The following order seems practicable. The abdominal organs should first receive attention, after the integuments had been removed, then the thorax and lastly the cranium, and having done then give them one by one to the profession, and let each one draw the conclusion from the data given, and compare with others, and in the end reap all the advantages that must be obtained from Post Mortem Examination

Alfred Jones
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